

MEETING: 31/01/2019

Ref: 15001

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Advice and Support

South London Refugee Association

Adv: Sandra Jones

Base: Lambeth

Amount requested: £82,347

**Benefit: Croydon, Merton,
Lambeth and Wandsworth**

Amount recommended: £82,400

The Applicant

South London Refugee Association (SLRA) has supported refugees and asylum seekers experiencing severe poverty and hardship since 1991 - initially as a project of Merton Voluntary Services Council before becoming an independent charity in 2003. Services include: advice and casework support, befriending, advocacy, ESOL, employment support and positive activities to build independence, resilience and integration into local communities. SLRA also works with unaccompanied minors, supporting their transition from local authority care to independent living once they reach 18 years. The Trust has been funding an Advice Co-ordinator for the past three years.

The Application

SLRA is seeking funding for a further two years of their current funding towards their advice service. This covers the Advice Co-ordinator (0.8FTE), volunteer training and expenses, outreach venue costs and associated running costs. This is a slight increase from the previous grant as the salary cost has been reviewed and is now in line with similar posts. Also, venue costs have increased as they are providing outreach in more places.

The Recommendation

The proposal is for continuation funding of a three-year project funded by your Committee under Investing in Londoners. Over the three years of operation the project has demonstrated high impact for those people accessing their service, exceeding all targets set for the project. The organisation continues to have a good reputation for high quality services to those facing severe hardship. Paul Hamlyn Foundation has recently identified SLRA as one of 3 organisations across the UK to take part in a pilot project working with newly arrived unaccompanied minors to work with local authorities to sort out their immigration status prior to leaving care.

A further two years will enable the project to continue providing advice services. This project is a good fit with your Bridging Divides - Advice and Support. The increase in salary costs is justified and in line with other similar posts. Over the last three years the outreach work has expanded, as planned, and this has necessitated using new venues, which have been factored into the grant proposal.

£82,400 over two further years (£40,800; £41,600) for a p/t Advice Co-ordinator (4 dpw) and associated running costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
18/03/2016	£96,000 over three years (£31,700; £32,000; £32,300) towards the cost of a part time Advice Co-ordinator (4 days per week), and associated running costs

Background and detail of proposal

Operating from premises in Lambeth, SLRA also runs outreach sessions in community venues in Wandsworth, Croydon and Merton. The project will provide advice including immigration (to OISC Level 2), debt, housing and welfare benefits through the Advice Co-ordinator who will recruit, train and supervise a specialist team of volunteers who will support with destitution and homelessness prevention and reduction. This advice team will operate from the twice weekly drop-in sessions where a range of support including advice as well as emotional and practical support, with follow-up casework where needed.

The Advice Co-ordinator will also work with staff and volunteers to develop and facilitate training for volunteers and workshops with the clients to increase knowledge and foster confidence and self-advocacy. Each year 300 people will be given advice/casework with 15 volunteers being trained and supervised.

Financial Information

The deficit in the accounts for 2018 is due to the spending down of existing restricted funds. The budgeted income figures for 2019 have increased significantly due to new projects such as the one mentioned above which is being funded by Paul Hamlyn.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Examined Accounts £	2018 Examined Accounts £	2019 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	270,371	280,946	357,000
- % of Income confirmed as at 14/11/2018	n/a	%	83%
Expenditure	(255,328)	(307,997)	(332,150)
Total surplus/(deficit)	15,043	(27,051)	24,850
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(2,287)	(27,051)	10,850
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	17,330	0	14,000
	15,043	(27,051)	24,850
Cost of Raising Funds	0	4,396	11,000
- % of income	0.0%	1.6%	3.1%
Operating expenditure (total expenditure)	255,328	307,997	332,150
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	94,451	97,298	111,298
No of months of operating expenditure	4.4	3.8	4.0
Reserves policy target	63,832	76,999	83,038
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	30,619	20,299	28,261